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ABSTRACT

A content analysis of network children's programming was undertaken on three consecutive Saturdays in November, 1971, with a total of 14-1/2 hours of programs being videotaped. Each program was then viewed by monitors who judged particularly about racial and ethnic characteristics of program content. Findings were that over 60 percent of the shows with human characters had no Black or minority characters at all, and no show had only Black or other minority characters; Blacks and other minorities rarely appeared in work situations; Blacks who were major characters were depicted generally with positive attributes, while Whites were shown with both positive and negative traits; the occasional Black leader had a White co-leader, while most shows had White leaders; non-American and non-White cultures were referred to negatively almost four out of five times; Indians and Asians were almost always treated as negative stereotypes; while good characters generally did not have accents, over half of the villains did; most shows displayed no interaction between races; race was never mentioned or discussed; and all figures of authority or sources of information were white. (Author/SH)

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NETWORK CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

A Content Analysis of Black and Minority Treatment On Children's Television

August 1972

Prepared For

Action for Children's Television

by

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Black Efforts for Soul in Television
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	1
Summary of Findings	2
Methodology	3
Number of Characters by Race	4
Occupations, Aims and Roles of Characters	5
Cultures and Ethnic Groups	6
Relationships between Black and White Characters	7
Content Analysis and Further Study	8

Appendices:

I. Programs Monitored

II. Instructions for Monitors

TableI: Number of Characters by Race

Table II: Roles of Characters

Table III: Aims and Values Projected by Major Characters

Table IV: Occupational Status of Major Characters

Table V: References to Other Cultures; Language of Characters

Introduction

As previous studies have documented, American society is becoming increasingly dependent upon visual modes of communication. The average child now growing up in our society will, by the time he is 65, have spent approximately nine years of his life before a television screen.

The impact of this statistic is particularly significant for Black and low-income children. Researchers have documented that children in these two groups spend even more time watching television, and perceiving its content as reality. The Violence Commission, in its report, stated, "Television is a particularly potent force in families where parental influence and family group ties are weak or completely lacking, notably in low-income areas. In these instances, television does not displace parental influence, it fills a vacuum."

The BEST study of children's programming was undertaken primarily as a content analysis of Black and minority treatment on these programs. The analysis was carried out through the monitoring of 14½ hours of network programming, designated by the networks as children's fare. Although a complete analysis both of program content and methodology is included in a separate section of this report, the following is a brief summary of the major findings.

A Brief Summary of Major Findings

1. Black and other minority characters make up a small percentage of characters, 7% and 2% respectively;

2. Over 60% of the shows with human characters have no Black or minority characters at all; no show has only Black or other minority characters;

3. Blacks and other minorities rarely appear in work situations, while whites often appear as managers, professionals, law officers, workers and bums;

4. Blacks who are major characters are depicted generally with positive attributes, while whites are shown with both positive and negative traits;

5. There are several Black heroes, but no Black villains;

6. The occasional Black leader has a white co-leader, while most shows have white leaders;

7. Non-American and non-white cultures are referred to negatively almost four out of five times;

8. Indians and Asians are almost always treated as negative stereotypes;

9. Only occasionally does a good character speak with an accent, or in dialect, while over half the villains speak with accents, most commonly German or Russian;

10. Most shows have no interaction between races, and in most cases where there are integrated groups, there is one Black among the group;

11. In the two shows with Black stars, Blacks interact only with white characters;

12. Race is never mentioned or discussed;

13. All figures of authority, or sources of information, e.g., on shows designated as educational, are white.

Methodology

BEST's content analysis of network children's programming was based on a sample of children's programs broadcast three consecutive Saturdays in November, 1971. (CBS, November 13, 1971; ABC, November 20, 1971; NBC, November 27, 1971) A total of 14½ hours of programs were videotaped. These are the same programs which formed the basis of F. Earle Barcus' "Network Programming and Advertising in the Saturday Children's Hours: A June and November Comparison", researched for Action for Children's Television.

During August 1972, the tapes were viewed by a team of specially trained monitors. Each program was viewed by two monitors who scored the results on a specially prepared questionnaire. Each monitor was instructed to look for specific actions, and judge from the programs content data about race and ethnic characteristics. Directly following viewing, the monitors compared and reconciled their tabulations. Any discrepancies were reconciled by viewing the tape a second time.

Only the program material was classified; the commercials and other non-program material was ignored. A separate monitoring form was completed for each program segment. A segment was defined as a unit composed of homogeneous program content - a story, cartoon, musical segment. Consequently, some programs could have more than one program segment. (See Appendix II for instructions to monitors)

Number of Characters by Race

The monitoring results for the Saturday morning network programming on ABC, CBS, and NBC reveal that of the 47 program segments broadcast during the approximately 14½ hours of programming, a total of 440 identifiable characters appeared. (This excludes crowd shots where no identification or tabulation was possible). Sixty-one percent of the characters were white, 30 percent were classified "not applicable". This category includes animals, monsters and imaginary characters. Blacks accounted for 7 percent of the characters; other non-white minorities account for 2 percent.

A program by program examination indicates that 40 of the 47 segments had white characters, 26 had animal or other non-human characters, and only 11 had Black characters. Six had other minorities.

When whites appeared, there were, on the average, 6 per segment. When Blacks appeared, on the average there were only 2. No segment had more than 2 other minorities. Non-humans averaged more per segment - 3 - than did minorities. Twenty-five shows had all white human characters. No show had all Black or other minority people.

Looking at the number of major characters in the segments indicates that 69 percent were white, 18 percent non-human, 11 percent Black and 2 percent other minorities. (The roles and treatment of the characters will be discussed later in the report). Thirty-four segments had white major characters, 16 had non-humans, 8 had Black, and 3 had other minorities. Twenty-five segments had all white

leads; only one had a Black lead only (a convict making good as a boxer), and one had another minority lead (an Indian boy being beaten by Woody Woodpecker).

Occupations, Aims and Roles of the Characters

Examining the characters when they appeared in job situations, 13 whites, 2 non-humans and no Blacks were portrayed as managers or administrators. Thirty-three whites, 4 non-humans and 5 Blacks (basketball players) appeared as professionals. There were 18 white skilled workers, one non-human and no Blacks. Seven whites, 2 Orientals (Charlie Chan and son), and no Blacks were law enforcement officers. One Black and 4 whites appeared as unskilled workers. One Black, one other minority and 12 whites appeared as bums or criminals. The data reveals that Blacks rarely appear in work situations.

The characters were analyzed for specific behaviors that could be classified as indicating goals and values. The attributes for white characters were "concern for others" (29 characters); "materialistic" (18); "creative" (17); "destructive" (17); "stupid or incompetent" (14); "selfish" (13);"pursuing power or success" (12); "hardworking" (11); "Self-respect" (11), and "lazy" (7). For Blacks, the order of attributes was "concern for others" (10); "creative" and "hardworking" (6); "stupid and incompetent" (3); "lazy and materialistic" (1). It is interesting to note that the three most common attributes for Blacks are positive traits, while white characters have a mixture of positive and negative traits.

This difference is due in part to the fact that white characters play good guys and villains as well as minor parts; Blacks only play good guys or minor parts.

Three programs have Black heroes: the "Globetrotters," the "Jackson Five" and the "Bugaloos." Five programs have white heroes. There are 10 shows with white villains, but no Blacks play the heavies on Saturday morning. There are 21 white characters in leadership roles, and only two Blacks. Both Black leaders have help in their leadership position by white co-leaders.

Other Cultures and Ethnic Groups

The overwhelming bulk of shows are set in the United States, or in a non-descript, non-ethnic and totally amalgamated environment. However, about half the segments make reference to or depict another country, culture or group of people.

Only two shows make reference to other cultures with respect and admiration. Two segments of "The Curiosity Shop" praise the architectural achievements of Egypt, China, Greece, Rome and Europe; one show also praises French cooking. However, when a villain or unpleasant climate is needed, 10 European, 4 Asian and 4 Indian cultures or people are stereotyped. Two shows depict gypsies as tricky and dirty; Swiss yodelers are called "nuts"; a French person is depicted as power hungry. Three Italians appear as gangster types, along with a Russian dictator and a German rat. All four shows with minorities as major characters depict them as derogatory stereotypes. A Chinese coolie and a stupid Hawaiian appear in "Road Runner;"

"Jerry Lewis" has a Charlie Chan character, and "Josie and the Pussycats" has a Chinese villain. All four references to American Indians are derogatory.

The characterization of persons using dialect is interesting. Although nearly all characters speak standard English, 22 segments have some characters speaking in dialect. In only two cases do heroes use dialect ("The Jackson Five" speak largely in slang, and the "Bugaloos," including the Black group member, speak a kind of cockney English). Nine of 16 villains have an accent: 4 German, 2 Russian, 1 hillbilly, and 1 Frenchman. All Oriental characters who have dialogue speak "pidgin" English.

Relationships Between Black and White Characters

Only 6 of the 47 segments monitored had significant or substantive relationships between Black and white characters.

In three of the 6 segments, one Black person was a full and equal part of the group. In the "Bugaloos," the Black person was one of four flying, bug-like people who spoke a cockney English. In "Take a Giant Step" (NBC), one of the three children who served as host was Black; in "Josie and the Pussycats," one of the singers was Black.

Two of the programs were animated comedies based on the characters of all Black groups, the "Jackson Five" (ABC) and the "Harlem Globetrotters" (CBS). In each of these half hour shows, the Black groups were the major characters. In the "Globetrotters," the team manager was "granny", an elderly white woman who the Globetrotters greatly respected. (The "plot" of this segment was the Globetrotters trying to get granny a birthday present.) Granny's relationship to the

Globetrotters was one of mild condescension. For example, she kept their money for them because she was afraid they would lose it. However, there was mutually expressed affection between them. In the "Jackson Five" story, which was the "Wizard of Oz" in Blackface, Michael and the other members of the group appeared in awe of, and showed great respect and deference to the white witch. It is interesting to note that these Black characters appear in an essentially all-white society. The "Jackson Five" meet only whites, and the "Harlem Globetrotters" see only two other minor characters who are lost in the crowd.

Of the three hosts on "The Curiosity Shop" (ABC), the Black girl is the oldest and clearly recognized as smarter than the two white boys who serve as co-hosts. In this relationship, the younger children (white) definitely look up to the other child (Black).

It is interesting to note what seems to be a pattern in integrated group situations. The make-up is generally 1 Black to 2 or more whites, and 1 girl to 2 or more boys.

None of the 47 segments had any direct discussion or reference to race. Even a discussion of "soul" in "Take a Giant Step" was exclusively about man's essence, and not about Blackness.

Content Analysis and Further Study

The BEST report on Saturday children's programming is a content analysis of what is broadcast on three Saturdays by the networks. We feel that these tapes give a representative selection of what is offered by the networks during the 1971-72 season. Other Saturdays might have produced slightly different characters on some shows, but in the main, the cast of characters on most weekly shows remains the same. We believe this is a good sample.

By selecting network shows, the results have general validity for programming in most cities. However, much of the programming intended for children is either syndicated shows, which are network reruns, old cartoon series, or locally produced shows. Monitoring these shows would give a better picture of what is available in each city. Unfortunately, this kind of detailed survey was beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, there are shows not primarily intended for children, but which are in fact viewed by many children. The application of our monitoring techniques to the programs children watch would yield interesting results.

Content analysis has, by its nature, certain limitations. First, our adult monitors look at programs in a way no child views them. The monitor is trying to record what is set out, and cannot know what is perceived by a child. The monitor records in units, and cannot record which character or scene makes a strong impact, or is

ignored. The monitor looks at the programming over a finite period, and cannot judge the cumulative impact of long periods of viewing. Further research is needed into how Black and white children perceive the content of television fare.

Appendices

Appendix I. Programs Monitored

NBC	CBS	ABC
Dr. Dolittle	Bugs Bunny	Jerry Lewis
Woody Woodpecker	Scooby Doo	Road Runner
Earth Lab	Harlem Globetrotters	Funky Phantom
Barrier Reef	Help! Its the Hair Bear Bunch	Jackson Five
Take a Giant Step	Pebbles and Bam Bam	Bewitched
Bugaloos	Archie's TV Funnies	Lidsville
Jetsons	Sabrina the Teen-Aged Witch	Curiosity Shop
	Josie and the Pussy-Cats	Jonny Quest
	The Monkees	Lancelot Link

Appendix II.

Instructions for Monitors

BBST's study of children's programming is a content analysis of Black and minority treatment on children's programming. It is important that you complete each question carefully and completely. If there is any doubt on how to classify an action, describe it so that later it can be discussed and classified.

Before starting your monitoring, please thoroughly familiarize yourself with the questionnaire and the instructions and definitions on this page. Listing the names of the major characters and indicating their races will assist you in answering other questions.

Q1. Mark the appropriate race for <u>each</u> character that appears in the program segment. At the conclusion of the show, total the number for each race.

<u>General Notes:</u>

- Where the race of the character is unclear, note it under "unknown"(UK)
- If the character is classified as "other", please specify what race, i.e., Indian, Oriental;
- Where the character is non-human, i.e., animal or fantasy figure, mark "not applicable" (NA)

Q2. The "major character" is judged from context as the person who appears most often on screen, or who has the most important part in the segment. It is possible to have more than one major character. This question asks you to identify by race the major character(s).

Q3. The supporting or secondary characters can be judged from context as the associates, assistants or "sidekicks" of the major character(s). Their roles are more important than a person in a crowd or walk-ons.

Q4. If the major characters are involved in a work situation, classify them by status and race. There is a special category for law officer, i.e., policemen, detectives). List the specific jobs.

Q5. Judge from the context when a major character exhibits one of the listed attributes. Indicate in the appropriate column the race of the character exhibiting the trait. If possible, list below the question the specific behavior that led to your classification.

Q7. Characterize the relationship between the major non-white and white characters according to the characteristics listed in the question. Below the question, list the characters referred to.

Q8. If, during the segment, there is a reference either in story or setting, to another nation's history or culture, mark the geographic area referred to and the appropriate category.

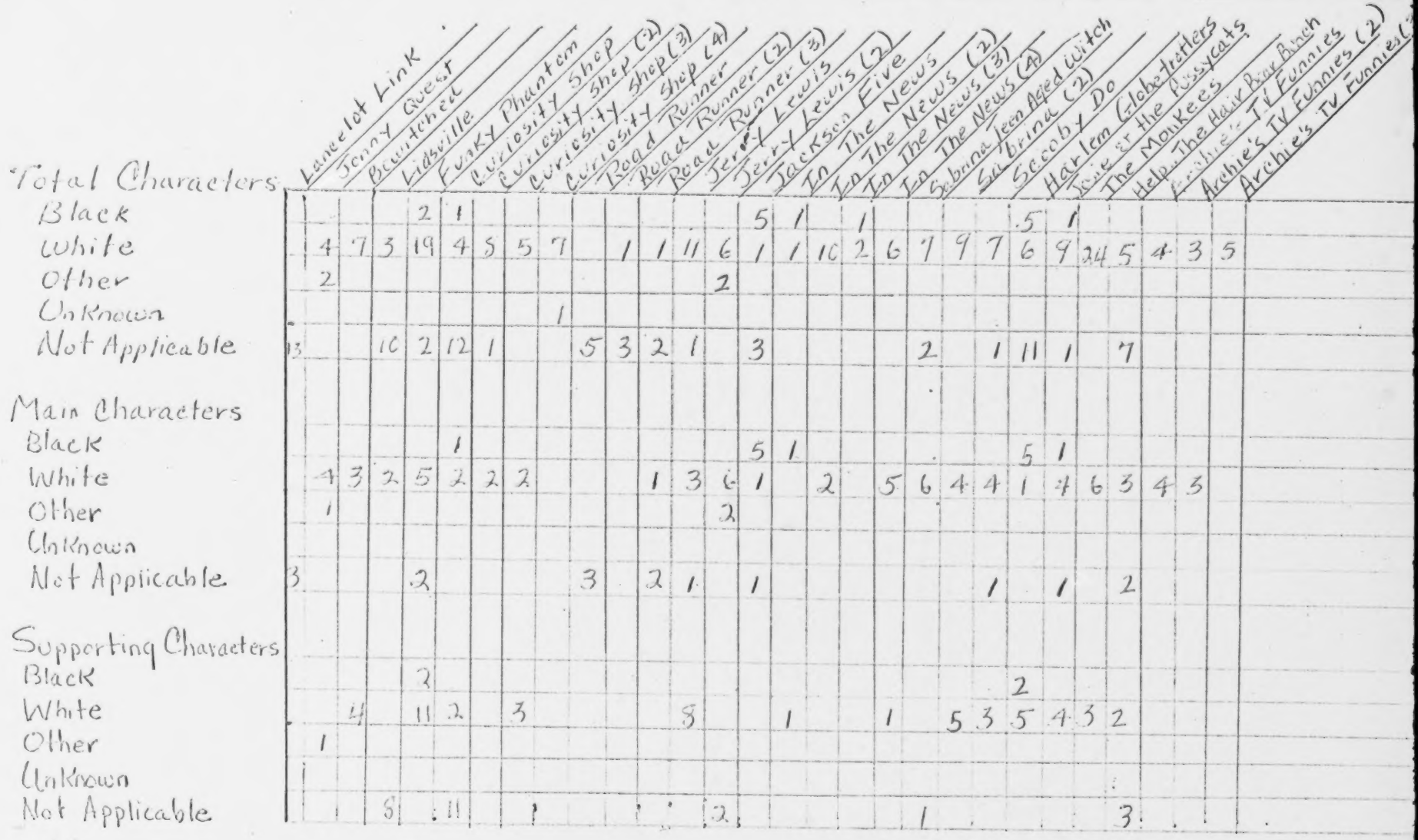

TABLE I: Number of Characters by Race

	Archie's TV Funnies (4)	Archie's TV Funnies (5)	Archie's TV Funnies (6)	Pebbles and Bam Bam	Pebbles and Bam Bam (2)	Pebbles and Bam Bam (3)	Pebbles and Bam Bam (4)	Pebbles and Bam Bam (5)	Dr. Dolittle	Take A Giant Step	Woody Woodpecker	Woody Woodpecker (2)	Woody Woodpecker (3)	Mr. Wizard	The Fat Albs	The Bugaloos	Total No. of Characters	Total No. of Segments	No. of Total Characters
Total Characters																			
Black									7				3	2		1	29	11	7
White	7	5		13		1	6	1	6	11	11			3	14		9	5	209	40	61
Other										1	2			1	1				9	6	2
UnKnown																			1	1	
Not Applicable		2		9	1	1	1		14			4	15	1			3	9	134	26	30
Main Characters																					
Black											1				2			1	16	8	11
White	4			4		1	1	1	2	3	2				3	2	4	4	104	34	69
Other														1					4	3	2
UnKnown																			0	0	
Not Applicable				2	1	1	1						3	1				2	29	16	18
Supporting Characters																					
Black											6				2				12	4	
White	3			3			4		4	8	9			3		2			88	21	
Other										1	2				1				5	4	
UnKnown																			0	0	
Not Applicable				2					14			12				1		7	61	10	

TABLE I: (continued)

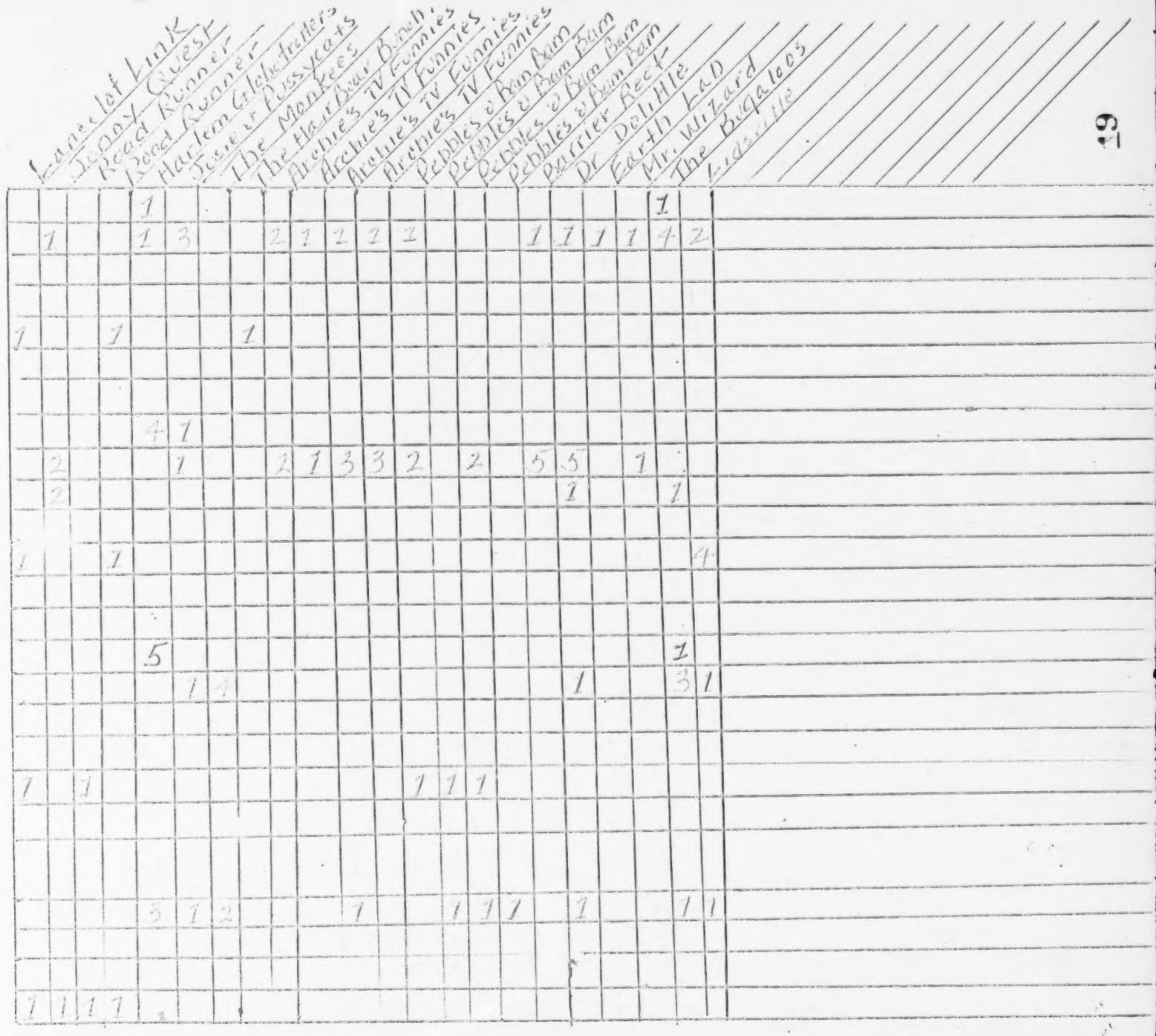

TABLE II: ROLES OF CHARACTERS

	Black	White	Other	Unknown	Not Applicable
Materialistic	1	18	___	___	4
Lazy, shiftless	1	7	___	___	4
Selfish	___	13	___	___	3
Stupid, Incompetent	3	14	___	___	7
Pursuing power or success	___	12	___	___	1
Creative	6	17	___	1	2
Hardworking	6	11	___	___	5
Destructive	___	17	___	___	6
Concern for others	10	29	___	___	6
Self respect	___	11	___	___	___

TABLE III:

AIMS AND VALUES PROJECTED BY MAJOR CHARACTERS

	Black	White	Other	Unknown	Not Applicable
Managerial/Administrative	___	13	___	___	2
Professional	5	33	1	___	4
Skilled Worker	___	18	___	___	1
Law Enforcement Officer	___	7	2	___	___
Unskilled/Service Worker	1	4	___	___	1
Criminal/bum	1	12	1	___	___

TABLE IV:

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

References To Other Cultures	Lancelot Link	Jimmy Quest	Lidsville	Curiosity Shop	Curiosity Shop	Curiosity Shop	Curiosity Shop	Road Runner	Road Runner	Road Runner	Jerry Lewis	Jackson Five	Scooby Do	Josie and the Pussycats	The Monkees
European						Greece Rome France	Greek							French chef	
Respect															
Factual				Italy											
Derogatory	Gypsy		Italy		Swiss		Italy			France					
Asian															
Respect							China								
Factual															
Derogatory								Chinese Coolie	Hawaiin stereotype		Chinese stereo.			Chinese	
African															
Respect					Egypt	Egypt									
Factual															
Derogatory															
Other															
Respect															
Factual		Latin America													
Derogatory			Amer. Indian											Indian	Indian
Language															
Dialect:															
Black											Slang				
White	German*	German*	Ital.*			French				French		hill-billy		Russian* German*	
Other		Indian	Chinese Indian								Chinese				
Unknown															
Not Applicable															

* villains

TABLE V.

References To Other Cultures	The Harlem Globetrotters Meet Tu Femmes	Bugs Bunny	Bugs Bunny	Bugs Bunny	Dr. Dolittle	The Jetsons	The Bugaloos	Totals
European								
Respect								3
Factual						Russia		2
Derogatory	gypsy			Russian	French	Italy	German	10
Asian								
Respect								1
Factual								0
Derogatory								4
African								
Respect								2
Factual								0
Derogatory								0
Other								
Respect								0
Factual								1
Derogatory			hill-billy			Indian stereo.		5
Language Dialect:								
Black								
White		German	hill billy *	Russian *	French *	French Italian		Cockney German *
Other								
Unknown								
Not Applicable								

TABLE V. —continued